



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 117th CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION

Vol. 167

WASHINGTON, MONDAY, APRIL 12, 2021

No. 62

Senate

The Senate met at 3 p.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. LEAHY).

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Almighty God, Creator of all things, thank You for Your unfailing love and compassion.

Lord, forgive us when we have fallen short of Your will. We have spoken when we should have kept silent. We have said nothing when we should have lifted a voice of concern.

Create within our lawmakers clean hearts. Renew a right spirit within them. May they permit humility to precede honor. Give us the conviction that with Your help all things are possible.

And, Lord, comfort all who mourn the death of United States Capitol Police Officer William Evans. Also, continue to keep Your healing Hands on Officer Kenneth Shaver.

We pray in Your mighty Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The President pro tempore led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Polly Ellen Trottenberg, of New York, to be Deputy Secretary of Transportation.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The deputy majority leader is recognized.

RAMADAN

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, today marks the first day of Ramadan. For the second year in a row, Muslims around the world will be celebrating Islam's holiest month in the midst of this pandemic.

Traditionally, Ramadan is an opportunity for families to gather in prayer and break bread together after a day-long fast, but I know many people of the Muslim faith will not have that opportunity this year. It is a painful reminder of all the sacrifices all of us have been called to make since the beginning of this pandemic.

For all of those who observe, may this holy month be a time of peace for you and your loved ones, and I hope you will be able to break bread together soon.

HONORING OFFICER WILLIAM F. EVANS

Mr. President, today is also another day of mourning for the men and women of the U.S. Capitol Police Force.

I spent much of my life working in this building as a college student, law student, staff member, Congressman, and Senator. This building has a special place in my life and in the lives of many Americans. It is an enduring symbol of American freedom and democracy. It is recognized around the world.

Sadly, it is also a target for mean-spirited attackers and troubled souls.

We saw that on January 6, when a mob invaded these halls and this Chamber. We saw it on 9/11, when terrorists hijacked a plane with the intent of crashing it into this building. And, sadly, we saw it again on April 2 with the vehicular attack on the north entrance barricade to the Capitol, one of the most frequently used entrances.

The men and women of the U.S. Capitol Police guard this Capitol 24/7, 365. They put their lives at risk to protect this building and those of us who work here and those who visit. They literally risk their lives for us. It is the clearest symbol of heroism that I can think of.

On April 2, one of those heroes, Capitol Police Officer Billy Evans, made the ultimate sacrifice. He was killed in the line of duty defending the people in this building.

Officer Evans was 41 years old—41. An 18-year veteran of the Capitol Police, he was a familiar, friendly face to many of us here at the Capitol, where he often worked at the north entrance.

Officer Evans was a native of North Adams, MA, a father of two children, Logan and Abigail. His family said that he was “the best father, son, brother, and friend that anyone could ever hope for.” They went on to say:

The absolute most important thing in life was his two children. . . . He was always so eager to show how proud he was of everything they did. Any opportunity to spend time with his children brightened both their lives and his. Their dad was their hero long before the tragic events of last week.

The loss of Officer Evans is heartbreaking. I join in praying for his family and loved ones.

We also send our prayers to Officer Ken Shaver, who was injured in the April 2 attack, and we wish him a speedy recovery.

The U.S. Capitol Police have faced incredible hardship this year with the loss of three officers: Officer Evans, Officer Brian Sicknick, and Officer Howard Liebengood. And 80 officers were seriously injured in the insurrectionist mob attack on January 6.

● This “bullet” symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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The debt that we owe Capitol Police officers like Officer Evans can never be repaid, and the same is true for Capitol Police Officers Brian Sicknick, Howard Liebengood, Jacob Chestnut, and Detective Michael Gibson, and others who have been injured or lost their lives through their service. Our gratitude for their sacrifice cannot be captured by words.

This Tuesday, Officer Evans will lie in honor in the Capitol Rotunda, where those whom he died to protect can pass by and pay their respects.

Every day it is incumbent for those of us who work in this building to remember this brave officer and to thank him and the men and women of the U.S. Capitol Police, who have given so much to keep us safe.

(Ms. HIRONO assumed the Chair.)

FILIBUSTER

Madam President, on January 8, I think most Americans—most of the world, really—were still deeply shaken by what happened in this building on January 6, when the mob broke in.

January 6 was an assault on American democracy. It was an armed insurrection not just against this building but against the Constitution and the Government of the United States of America.

The violent mob was sent to this Capitol by a defeated President who tried to cancel an American election. That mob overran and ransacked this Capitol, smashing windows and doors. They built a gallows on the Capitol grounds and called for the Vice President to be hanged for following his duties under the Constitution, for refusing to join in the coup attempt.

People died that day in this building and on these grounds. Capitol Police Officer Brian Sicknick, whom I mentioned earlier, suffered fatal injuries trying to hold back the insurrectionist mob sent by the President. Two more officers who fought to save the Capitol died by suicide in the days that followed. More than 140 police officers suffered serious injuries. Many of them are still recovering.

But the insurrection at the Capitol, the attack on American democracy, wasn't what alarmed the dark-money special interests that came together for an all-hands-on-deck conference call just 2 days later, on January 8.

The conference call was organized by a group with the innocuous name "Stand Together"—the group that is run by the Koch brothers' organization, well known to anyone who follows American politics. Among the participants on this private conference call was an adviser to the minority leader, Senator MCCONNELL.

We know these things because a recording of the conference call found its way to Jane Mayer, an investigative reporter for *The New Yorker* magazine, who has written a book on the Koch brothers and dark money in politics.

What alarmed the dark-money special interests on that conference call was not the violent insurrection in this

building 2 days earlier. According to Ms. Mayer's reporting, the reason the special interests were frightened was because they could not find a way to turn the American people against a piece of legislation, S. 1, a bill known as the For the People Act.

The For the People Act is a democracy defense bill. It would limit the influence of dark money and special interests on our politics, and it would improve access to the ballot box for American voters.

We know that access is under attack today. In Georgia and 30 other States, efforts are being made to suppress the American vote.

The Koch brothers' group spends its money freely to insert political control. They sent the pollsters out before this conference call to test every attack they could think of against this bill. Nothing worked.

Let me read you a passage from Ms. Mayer's article. It is a bit long. So bear with me. This is based on a recording of the call.

"Kyle McKenzie, the research director for the Koch-run advocacy group Stand Together, told fellow conservatives and Republican congressional staffers on the call that he had a 'spoiler.' When presented with a very neutral description of the bill, people were generally supportive," McKenzie said, adding, "The most worrisome part is conservatives were actually as supportive as the general public when they heard the neutral description. In fact, he warned, there is a large, very large, chunk of conservatives who are supportive of these efforts."

As a result, Mayer wrote, "McKenzie conceded the legislation's opponents would likely have to rely on Republican Senators, where the bill is now under debate, to use what they called 'under the dome' strategies"—legislative maneuvers such as the filibuster—to stop the bill, because turning public opinion against it would be incredibly difficult.

S. 1, the For the People Act, is a bill to stop billionaires from buying elections. You can see why Charles Koch, who has grown accustomed to using his wealth to influence elections and dominate the national agenda, wouldn't like that kind of a bill. And you can see why he and others, members of the dark-money power elite, would be alarmed that all the spin-doctoring that money can buy can't turn people against the bill. It can't even turn conservatives against the bill.

What is a poor billionaire to do? Well, they said it right there on the conference call. They can't debate the bill because they don't have a winning argument. Senator MCCONNELL is just going to have to kill it "under the dome." Senator MCCONNELL is going to have to filibuster it.

One of the myths that defenders of the filibuster like to use is that it encourages debate and compromise. In reality, today's phone-it-in, remote control filibuster is used to make sure debate never even starts.

There is another myth the defenders of the filibuster would like us to believe. They say, and Senator MCCONNELL has repeated it, the filibuster has nothing to do with race. History tells us the opposite is true. The filibuster has always been more a creation of James Crow than James Madison. Segregationists used filibusters to block anti-lynching bills in 1922, 1923, 1924, 1935, and 1938. Segregationist Senators filibustered bills to outlaw poll taxes in 1942, 1944, and 1946. Segregationist Senators filibustered bills outlawing discrimination in employment, housing, and voting in 1957, 1960, and 1964. Every time segregationists used the filibuster to block civil rights measures, they spoke of the tactic as nearly a sacred principle passed down by our Founding Fathers.

Now, with voting rights under the broadest attack in more than 50 years, with hundreds of bills being introduced in State legislatures to make it harder for many Americans—especially people of color—to vote, we are once again facing a threat of a filibuster in a voting rights protection bill in the Senate. History repeats itself.

Largely under Senator MCCONNELL's leadership, today's filibuster has been transformed into a weapon of mass obstruction. In 2009, during the Great Recession, America was in a financial free fall, our economy teetering on the edge of another depression, millions out of work, and homes and life savings at risk.

Senator MCCONNELL said: "My No. 1 priority is to make sure President Obama is a one-term President." And the No. 1 weapon he used to make good on his threat: the filibuster.

Now America has a new President. Senator MCCONNELL wasn't able to filibuster President Biden's American Rescue Plan because we used reconciliation. All 50 Democratic Senators, plus the Vice President, were prepared to vote and break the tie. Not one single Republican Senator would vote for President Biden's rescue plan.

Today, America is getting shots in the arm, and people are getting checks in their pockets because we passed that bill despite the intransigence of the other side of the aisle. We are beginning—just beginning—to break the back of this pandemic. There are still hotspots and worrisome reports, but we are beginning to break its back, and we are helping the millions of Americans who are hurting financially because of the pandemic shutdown.

Now the Senate is ready to start work on the next chapter of our national economic recovery. President Biden's American Jobs Plan is a bold plan to invest in climate change, job creation, and create the good jobs and the industries of the future here in America—not overseas, not in China, but here in America. That is President Biden's goal.

It would rebuild our roads, bridges, rails, ports, airports, and water systems. I learned during the break that,